

GOP Again in Trouble With Negro Electorate

BY ROY WILKINS

Right along through here the Negro voter and the Republican Party (not individual Republicans) seem to be heading for as much trouble as they had in 1964 when Barry Goldwater was carrying the GOP mail.

First there was the news that the former Arizona senator had organized a new group to be known as the Free Society. He denied that it was to be the leader of the right-wing conservatives.

Then there was the unbelievable contest for the presidency of the Young Republicans in which a candidate from North Carolina supported the Civil Rights Act and was pitted against a candidate from Kansas who denounced the act as well as the then pending GOP version of the voting rights bill.

The traditionalists on the race question—those who judge everything by a man's home state or by his accent—were confounded when the North Carolinian lost. At this moment, then, the Young Republicans are headed by a man who, after election, declared that "although it is not my personal view," he would abide by a resolution endorsing the Civil Rights Act.

Watson Case Cited

This Young Republican twist on civil rights was not enough, Rep. A. W. Watson, a South Carolina Democratic congressman, decided to turn Republican. He won in a special election and thus added an unreconstructed Southerner to the doughty band of 1965 devotees of the Grand Old Party.

Now comes the silver-tongued veteran, Sen. Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois, the Republican minority leader, and vows to tack his anti-reapportionment amendment to any bill that comes to the Senate floor. His amendment, in effect, would nullify the U.S. Supreme Court ruling ordering redistricting by the states in order to equalize voting.

Dirksen is pressing his amendment just after incredulously joyful Negro citizens of the nation have wit-



SCHOOL PROBLEMS MULLED—Shown trying to solve de facto segregation and allied problems in local school system at recent meeting of Clark County School District Planning Council are (seated from left) VOICE publisher Dr. Charles I. West, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Leland Newcomer and Operation Independence director Lubertha Johnson; (standing from left) Highland School principal Earl Brunner, SUN executive editor Bryn Armstrong, public relations expert Robert Brown, Madison School principal Dr. Joseph Caliguri, Clark County Economic Opportunity Board chairman Harvey Dondero, planning council chairman Robert Jones and REVIEW-JOURNAL editor Joe Digles.

nessed the election of 10 Negro candidates to the Georgia State Legislature as a result of the Supreme Court reapportionment ruling.

The Georgia event and the possible effect the Dirksen plan could have upon similar situations in other states are not lost upon Negro citizens. In simple, direct and intensely political terms, they see the Illinoisan and his Republican cohorts denying them access to public office, whereas Georgia Democrats seem willing to go along with a formula that will open legislative seats to them.

Dirksen Not Enemy

Of course, it is not as simple as that. Mr. Dirksen is not their enemy. He was a key figure in the breaking of the filibuster and the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. He is not now specifically trying to block Negroes from election to state legislatures. The trouble is that his devotion to an idea on the distribution of voting power runs smack into the emerging enfranchisement of several millions of hitherto denied Negro voters.

Added to all the other factors, and to the busy-as-a-bee workings of the John Birch Society in Republican ranks, the Dirksen proposal, besides perpetuating at least a part of an old wrong done urban white voters these many decades, is actual poison to Negro political aspirations.

The GOP can come back among Negro citizens. The 90% stranglehold of the Democrats can be broken, because all of them are not angels and all their schemes are not color-blind ones. But the Republicans have got to do more than bat back a nonexistent tear and shout a hollow hallelujah.

In the language of the late Billy Sunday, they have got to hit the sawdust trail of genuine rededication. While they are at it, they might ring in some computers and some long-range planning boards to smother Dirksen amendments and Kansas rights opponents and other racial monkey wrenches in the years of recovery.

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